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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine if there is any correlation between the grade point average of a teacher of low-income students and the effectiveness of his teaching. Ninety-five students from low-income families were asked to identify their "good" teachers. Sixty-five of the 69 specified teachers were then queried about their grade point average in college, both overall and in their majors. The median overall average was 2.8; in their majors, 3.2. Of the nine teachers who were identified most often by students, only two exceeded the mean for the overall grade average, and only two exceeded the mean grade point average in their major. The author concludes that a) there is little evidence in the available research to support the contention that requiring higher grade point averages for admission into teacher education programs will improve teaching in the public schools; b) arbitrary grade point requirements used in determining the admission of prospective teachers may be eliminating many effective teachers of low-income students; and c) further research is needed to determine the extent that arbitrary grade point averages may be eliminating good teachers for any income group. (HMD)

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ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION TO PROGRAMS PREPARING TEACHERS OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

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The Problem

Educators of teachers have perennially debated the question of just who should be admitted to programs designed to prepare teachers to teach in the public schools. The specific concern in this paper, however, is the admission of prospective teachers into programs designed to prepare them to work with low-income students. Even though this writer focuses on the admission to such programs, this research may have generic components. The possibility of teaching in schools with a large number of low-income students faces every teacher.[1] Thus, it is the special obligation of all institutions that prepare teachers to address the question of who should teach low-income students and what qualifications should they possess.

The question of admissions has recently become an even greater concern of teacher educators because of the alleged surplus of teachers. For example, Metzner and Sharp state that:

> We have an employers' market in education. Schools can be more selective in their teacher recruitment. If schools of education adopt selective admissions procedures, will the supply of applicants be reduced? Not likely; the supply may become even greater if

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1 The Office of Economic Opportunity indicated in 1971 that 25.5 percent of the population in the United States were receiving some kind of federal help because of their low-income status. The chances of teachers teaching in schools where there are a number of students from low-income families are considerable. Data taken from United States Department of Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1972. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 335.

> entrance into teaching programs becomes more prestigious and desirable.[2]

Not only are educators considering the opportunities the shortage has provided, but at the same time some are examining with chagrin the quality of the present force of teachers. Ebel's review of the literature indicates that prospective teachers have clearly ranked lower academically than students in other disciplines.[3] Consequently, the call for higher entrance standards into programs of teacher education continues.

Yet, the call for higher standards is not a new one. Even though there was no proclaimed surplus of teachers in the early 1960's, many teacher educators still argued for higher entrance requirements. Indeed, it took more courage then to call for higher entrance standards because there was the concurrent demand for an increased supply of teachers. Durflinger made such a request even though he stated:

> The most important problem pertaining to recruitment is obtaining enough qualified teachers for the ever-increasing multitude of children in the nation's schools. School populations are expected to increase by approximately 1 million for each year for at least a decade. This increase required an annual addition of nearly 50,000 teachers.[4]

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2 Seymour Metzner and Richard M. Sharp, "Turning the Tide in Teacher Quality", The Elementary School Journal, 71 (March, 1971), pp. 322-323.

3 Robert L. Ebel, "Measurement Applications in Teacher Education: A Review of Relevant Research", The Journal of Teacher Education, 17 (Spring, 1966), p. 17.

4 Glenn W. Durflinger, "Recruitment and Selection of Prospective Elementary and Secondary School Teachers", Review of Educational Research, 33 (October, 1963), p. 355.

The decade Durflinger refers to is now with us and we now proportedly have an oversupply of teachers. The question of whether these teachers are competent or not is a problem that many are now vigorously debating. Metzner and Sharp have addressed this question and have suggested that:

> Now is the time to take action to remedy this shocking state of affairs. For the first time in many years, cities across the nation from San Diego to New York find that they have more teaching applicants than vacancies.

And now, Metzner and Sharp argue, is the time to raise standards.[5]

To further highlight the issue there is an especially acute oversupply of teachers in some areas of concentration. Bartels has sharpened the focus of those concerned with this problem. He illustrates that the "Lowest demand indexes are evident among teachers of the social sciences; business education; music, secondary; and agriculture".[6] Presumably, the argument by Bartels and others is that teachers in the areas indicated above should be faced with even tougher standards than the teachers in areas where there is an "under-supply."

But who should make such decisions on admissions? Davies and Edson have argued that the decision on who will be admitted should be in the hands of teacher educators and with an increased "supply" the decisions will be even more difficult.[7] Rabinowitz and Mitzel have argued

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5 Seymour Metzner and Richard M. Sharp, "Turning the Tide in Teacher Quality," p. 321.

6 Martin H.,Bartels, "Index of Teacher Demand - 1971, "The Educational Forum 37 (January, 1973), p. 164.

7 Don Davies and William H. Edson, "Selectivity in Teacher Education: An Analysis of Trends in Minnesota," The Journal of Teacher Education, 11 (September, 1960), p. 328.

similarly and have further broadened the issue:

> Each college faculty will have to weigh for itself the relative cost of admitting students whom it cannot later certify against the cost of rejecting students whom it would be desirable to certify as teachers. The costs must be reckoned, not only in the dollars and cents involved, but in such less tangible values as the consequences of selection policies for young college students, the teaching profession, and ultimately American education.[8]

Of course, some further crucial questions need to be addressed: Does the raising of academic entrance standards have an effect on the quality of the teachers educated by such programs when these teachers finally teach young people? Or is the raising of standards merely a morale booster for frustrated education professors in search of an academic discipline?

The answers to such questions are hard to find. It is interesting to note that there is considerable variability in the accepted grade point average of students admitted into teacher education programs. Nunney, Fiala, and Lewis conducted a study in 1962 to determine the "extent of agreement" on entrance requirements for 98 teacher education programs in the Western states during the Spring semester of that year. They found that of the institutions surveyed: "Only three institutions (three percent)

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8 William Rabinowitz and Harold E. Mitzel, "Some Observations on the Selection of Students for Teacher Education Programs," The Journal of Teacher Education, 12 (June, 1961), p. 164.

do not require a specific grade-point average for students desiring to enter their teacher education programs. In 41 institutions (43 percent), the students are admitted to the teaching program with a 'C' average."[9] In the remaining institutions the grade point average was higher and variable. The required grade point also depended on the subject matter major and on whether the student was in elementary or secondary education.[10]

In a broader survey of 180 public institutions which were all accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education it was found that: "Most institutions involved in the survey (92 percent) impose some official hurdle at the upper-division level which prospective teachers must clear if they are to be accepted as candidates for teacher certification." A 2.0 or lower average (based on a 4.0 system) was required in 80 percent of the public institutions and a grade point average of 2.1 to 3.0 was required in the remaining 20 percent.[11]

Thus, it is clear that even though most institutions require some academic standard there is considerable variability in the standards of various teacher education programs. Metzner and Sharp claim that what these programs do have in common is an "...ease of entrance into a teacher education sequence."[12] Even more shocking to some are Schultz's

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9 Derek N. Munney, Frances F. Fiala, and Maynard G. Lewis, "Teacher Selection in the Western States," The Journal of Teacher Education, 14 (December, 1963), p. 422.

10 Ibid., p 419

11 Robert M. Magee, "Admission-Retention in Teacher Education: Procedures Found in Programs Operated by Publicly Supported Institutions Accredited by the NCATE," The Journal of Teacher Education, 12 (March, 1961), p. 83.

12 Metzner and Sharp, "Turning the Tide in Teacher Quality," p 322.

findings. In comparing two groups of students, he found that the top 15 percent of the graduates academically and the bottom 15 percent of graduates found employment almost equally available. Forty six percent of the top group found employment while forty-two percent of the bottom group had found employment.[13] Hardly a significant difference between the two. Slaughter highlights and summarizes the problem:

> Grade point average is invariably the first criterion identified by college faculty as being relevant to teaching success. The GPA undoubtedly has its greatest value as a measure of the overall verbal ability of the candidate; since this ability is important to teaching, it would be unwise to ignore it. If it could be established that a high GPA produced a better than average teacher, the almost unbelievable arguments centered around whether or not a GPA requirement should be altered one-quarter of a point might cease. However, in spite of numerous investigations, the relationship between GPA and teacher success has never been established.[14]

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13 Raymond E. Schultz, "Comparing the First-Year Teaching Success of Best and Poorest Student Teachers," Educational Administration and Supervision, 40 (February, 1954), pp. 75-86.

14 C. H. Slaughter, "A Proposed Screening Program for Elementary Teacher Candidates," The Journal of Teacher Education, 20 (Fall, 1969), p. 344.

Slaughter further contends that judgements on a teacher's probable success can only be made after a teacher is actually on the job and not prior to entrance to a teacher preparation program.[15] Yet, even though the link between the academic GPA and teaching success has not been established, reportedly innovative programs use the grade point average as a selection vehicle. For example, the Internship Teaching Program for College Graduates at Temple University admits students "On the basis of their collegiate records and their performance during the tests and interviews..."[16]

But there are some indications that reliance on high academic standards for teacher selection is changing, especially in the selection of teachers for low-income students. Gold asserts that until 1970:

> Hunter College had always prided itself upon the elite quality of its students. A high school average in the mid-eighties had normally been required for admission. To enter the teacher education program after three or four semesters in the college, the student had to submit a record that was above average even for the selected population from which he came. As in other teacher education institutions, speech, health, and personality criteria were exercised, and additinnal

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15 C. H. Slaughter, "A Proposed Screening Program for Elementary Teacher Candidates," The Journal of Teacher Education, 20 (Fall, 1969), p. 344.

16 Frederic Harwood and H. Bernard Miller, "The Intern Teaching Program in the Urban School: Impact on Instructional Improvement," The Journal of Teacher Education, 23 (Winter, 1972), p. 428.

screening took place prior to admission to student teaching."[17]

However, in September 1970 Hunter began to admit students to their open admissions program in teacher education based on the following assumptions:

1) Open admissions promises to recruit to the teaching profession students from minority groups who often fail to meet conventional criteria.

2) It is essential that school faculties include to some degree teachers with backgrounds similar to those of the children they teach.

3) The existing pattern of selection has not proved to be an outstanding success; self-selection may be more valid than the employment of too narrow a basis for choice.

4) Studies of characteristics of effective teachers do not support exclusive reliance on measures of academic performance. Noncognitive factors play a fundamental part in teaching success.

5) The major obligation of teacher education is not polishing up potential that is already obvious, but lies instead in the development of potential that is waiting to be uncovered.[18]

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17 Milton J. Gold, "Opening the Doors to Teacher Education," Peabody Journal of Education, 49 (October, 1971), p. 30.

18 Ibid., p. 29

Thus, the question is: do high academic entrance standards help to improve the quality of teachers of low-income students, or are the assumptions of programs like Hunter's more equitable, more creative, and more humane?

Procedures

In order to determine answers to the above, this researcher asked ninety-six students, grades nine through twelve, to identify who their "good" teachers have been. The students were a random sample of a stratified population of students from low income families who attended three different high schools in southeastern New Hampshire.

But the question needs to be addressed: can students actually access the quality of their teachers? There is a developing body of evidence to enable educators to conclude that students can indeed access teacher effectiveness. Slaughter has argued that, "There seems to be no reason why we cannot use children's perceptions as one factor in the selection of teacher education candidates."[19] Coats. Swierenga, and Wickert have concluded in their study that even though the "evaluation packages" used in determining teacher effectiveness would include other means of evaluation, "...student ratings might be used profitably as one part of evaluation packages..." which would also include other variables and other ratings by different persons and groups.[20]

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19 C. H. Slaughter, "A Proposed Screening Program for Elementary Teacher Candidates," The Journal of Teacher Education, 20 (Fall, 1969), p. 345.

20 William D. Coats, Lloyd Swierenga, and Jack Wickert, "Student Perceptions of Teachers - A Factor Analytic Study," The Journal of Educational Research, 65 (April, 1972), p. 360.

Furthermore, in their efforts to do what many researchers suggest needs to be done in determining teacher effectiveness, McKeachie, Yi-Guang Lin, and Mann concentrated on measuring student learning in determining teaching effectiveness and found that student ratings could be used as "...one source of evidence about teacher effectivensss..."[21] As a result this researcher decided to utilize student opinions as a source in identifying people who have become effective teachers of low-income students.

A structured interview was administered to the ninety-six randomly selected students. The students were all selected from low-income families who met the Office of Education guidelines for selecting students for Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Services programs.[22] These students were asked to identify their "good" teachers and were asked to give the reasons for their choices. The reasons students gave for identifying teachers had a high Spearman Rank Correlation with the reasons the teachers who had been identified gave when asked why they thought they were effective. When the student responses were coded and categorized there was also a high correlation with similar earlier research concerning characteristics of effective teachers who teach low-income students. This gave additional reliability to the student identifications.[23]

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21 W. J. McKeachie, Yi-Guang Lin, and William Mann, "Student Ratings of Teacher Effectiveness: Validity Studies," American Educational Research Journal, 8 (May, 1971), p. 444.

22 United States Office of Education, Application Information and Program Manual: Talent Search, Upward Bound, Special Services, (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1972), Appendix A, p. 1.

23 John E. Splaine, "A Model Teacher-Education Program for Teachers of Low Income High School Students", (Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1973), pp. 109-110.

A structured interview was then administered to sixty-five of the sixty-nine identified teachers. In order to qualify for an interview the teachers had to be identified by at least two students in their respective schools. The question that this paper is concerned with in order to determine if there is any correlation between these identified "good" teachers and their college grade point average was asked each respondent: What was your approximate overall grade point average in college? _____. In your major? _____?

Results and Discussion

Below in Table 1, the results are separated for those teachers identified by at least two or three students and for those identified by four or more students. A composite representation is also presented.

Table 1

COLLEGE GRADE POINT AVERAGES OF IDENTIFIED TEACHERS[24]

G. P. A.	Mode	Mean	Median
Overall, 2-3 IDs	2.8 + 3.0	2.66	2.8
Overall, 4 IDs. or more	2.5	2.75	2.8
In major, 2-3 IDs.	3.0 + 3.8	3.17	3.2
In major, 4 IDs. or more	3.5	3.15	3.2
Composite of overall for all double IDs.	2.5 + 2.8	3.69	2.8
Composite in major for all double IDs.	3.0	3.17	3.2

24 John E. Splaine, "A Model Teacher-Education Program for Teachers of Low Income High School Students," (Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1973), p. 88

Clearly, there is no statistically significant difference between the overall grade point averages for the teachers identified two to three times and those identified four times or more. However, what this researcher did find significant was that of the three top identifications at each school only two of the nine exceeded the mean for an overall grade point average and five were 2.6 or below, based on a 4.0 system. Furthermore, of the nine top identifications only two exceeded the mean grade point average in their major and four were 2.5 and below. The top identification at School X had a 2.0 grade point average in his major and a teacher at School Z with seven identifications had a 2.0 grade point average in his major.

Table 2 contains a summary of the top three identifications at each school and their respective grade point averages.

Table 2

COLLEGE GRADE POINT AVERAGES OF TOP THREE IDENTIFIED TEACHERS IN EACH SCHOOL[25]

School	No. of IDS.	Overall G.P.A.	G.P.A. in Major
School X - Teacher 1	7	2.6	2.0
School X - Teacher 2	6	2.5	2.5
School X - Teacher 3	5	2.8	3.5
School Y - Teacher 1	9	2.5	2.8
School Y - Teacher 2	6	2.5	3.2
School Y - Teacher 3	6	3.2	3.8
School Z - Teacher 1	10	2.3	2.5
School Z - Teacher 2	9	3.2	3.0
School Z - Teacher 3	7	2.3	2.0

25 Adapted from: John E. Splaine, "A Model Teacher-Education Program for Teachers of Low Income High School Students," (Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1973), p. 89.

Of further interest, two of the identified teachers were high school dropouts and received their high school diplomas by taking the "high school equivalency" examinations. One of the identified teachers graduated with a grade point average that would no longer graduate that person from that university.

Conclusions

1) There is little evidence in the available research to support the contention that requiring higher grade point averages for admission into teacher education programs will improve teaching in the public schools.

2) The evidence presented in this paper indicates that arbitrary grade point requirements used in determining the admission of prospective teachers may be eliminating many effective teachers of low income students.

3) Further research is needed to determine the extent that arbitrary grade point averages may be eliminating good teachers for any income group.